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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the role of intermediate units in the provision of special education services to handicapped children with emphasis on formal and informal intermediate unit arrangements in New Jersey. Stressed for program effectiveness is the importance of positive attitudes of staff, practicality of programs, community and parent acceptance. Advantages (such as enabling local districts to have supplemental and supportive services) and disadvantages (such as high start up and operational costs) are listed. An informal arrangement in which nine participating New Jersey school districts cooperate to provide handicapped students with several placement options is described. Also explained is a more formal special services school district serving low incidence handicapped children. (DB)

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CAROL POOLE A-13

SERVING THE HANDICAPPED AND SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENT THROUGH INTERMEDIATE UNITS

1981 NSBA CONVENTION/DALLAS, TEXAS APRIL 11-14

SPEAKER Poole CLINIC NO. A-13

94-142 HAS ALLOWED THE FLEXIBILITY OF ARRANGEMENT TO THE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT. INTERMEDIATE UNITS PROVIDE FOR AN ARRANGEMENT WHICH ALLOWS FOR FLEXIBILITY AND ECONOMY.

MUCH AS I WOULD LIKE TO GIVE YOU A CONCRETE, READILY APPLICABLE, PROGRAM TO HELP EACH OF YOU IN YOUR OWN PLANNING, I CAN'T. THERE ARE TOO MANY VARIABLES CONCERNED.

INSTEAD I WILL RELATE SOME THINGS BOTH ATTITUDINAL AND CONCRETE WHICH WILL ACT AS STIMULATORS. YOU CAN BUILD ON THESE FOUNDATIONS.

REGARDLESS OF THE MODEL YOU PUT IN PLACE, THESE ARE THE THINGS THAT WILL MAKE YOUR PROGRAM WORK:

1. POSITIVE ATTITUDES
2. PRACTICALITY
3. COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE
4. PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE

WHEN THESE ASPECTS ARE MISSING, WE SEE THE OTHER SIDE.

WELL MEANING PERSONNEL (TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS) CAN DO MORE TO HINDER PROGRESS THAN ANY OTHER FACTOR. IF THEY FEEL THE HANDICAPPED, OR SPECIAL NEEDS, STUDENT CANNOT LEARN - HE WON'T LEARN. MAKE SURE THAT THE STAFF ADOPTS POSITIVE ATTITUDES..

LIKEWISE, PROGRAMS THAT ARE OVERLY COMPLEX, OR IMPRACTICAL, WILL FAIL BECAUSE THEY TRIGGER EXCESSIVE SPENDING, HIGHLIGHT THE ADDED COST OF EDUCATING THE HANDICAPPED, AND QUICKLY GAIN COMMUNITY DISAPPROVAL.

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FINALLY, PARENTS WHO ARE NOT ALLOWED PARTICIPATION WILL LOOK IN FROM THE OUTSIDE. THEY WILL FEEL APART AND WILL VIEW ALL EFFORTS ON THE PART OF THEIR CHILD AS SUSPECT.

WITH THESE WARNINGS IN MIND I HOPE TO EXPAND ON SOME INTERMEDIATE ARRANGEMENTS WHICH WILL PROTECT THE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT AND WILL PROVIDE EDUCATION FOR ALL THE HANDICAPPED.

INTERMEDIATE UNITS

INTERMEDIATE UNITS CAN BE FORMED FOR A VARIETY OF PURPOSES AND BY ALTERNATIVE LEGISLATIVE STRATEGIES. THESE ALTERNATIVES HAVE RESULTED IN DIFFERENT STATES HAVING DIFFERENT EMPHASIS IN TERMS OF THEIR OWN INTERMEDIATE UNITS,..RANGING FROM THOSE PROVIDING ONLY SERVICES FOR THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY TO THOSE PROVIDING ONLY SERVICES FOR LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS.. THERE ARE THOSE IN WHICH MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAMS IS MANDATED. . .TO THOSE IN WHICH BOTH MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IS TOTALLY VOLUNTARY.

THE TYPE OF INTERMEDIATE UNIT DEVELOPED IN YOUR STATE IS IN RESPONSE TO STATEWIDE CHANGING EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND HAS TAKEN PLACE AS A RESULT OF LEGISLATIVE ACTION THAT HAS ATTEMPTED TO MEET THESE NEEDS.

IN NEW JERSEY, WE DISCOVER A VARIETY OF VENTURES, OFFERING A DIVERSE RANGE OF SERVICE UNDER A NUMBER OF GOVERNING STRUCTURES.. THE NOTABLE DIFFERENCE IS, .. HOWEVER, THAT NEW JERSEY HAS NOT ATTEMPTED TO RESPOND ON A STATEWIDE NEEDS CHANGE WITH ANY SINGLE, COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE PLAN FOR THESE UNITS. IT HAS, INSTEAD, CREATED LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY FOR NUMEROUS, DISTINCT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AT THE INTERMEDIATE LEVEL. EACH OFFERS LIMITED SERVICE AND PROGRAM CAPABILITY.

I WILL BE DISCUSSING TWO TYPES OF INTERMEDIATE ARRANGEMENTS

OPERATING WFFECTIVELY WITHIN NEW JERSEY. . .BUT FIRST I WOULD LIKE TO SHOW YOU SHOW YOU SOME OF THE POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THESE ARRANGEMENTS:

ADVANTAGES OF INTERMEDIATE . UNITS

1. ENABLES LOCAL DISTRICTS TO HAVE EASILY ACCESSIBLE SUPPLEMENTAL AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES.
2. CONTRIBUTES TO DEVELOPMENT AND/OR PROVISION OF LEGISLATIVELY MANDATED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES THAT LOCAL DISTRICTS MAY BE UNABLE TO PROVIDE INDEPENDENTLY.
3. CONTRIBUTES TO THE EQUALIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL.
4. LEADS TO GREATER COST EFFECTIVENESS IN DELIVERY OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.
5. PROVIDES ADVANTAGES OF LARGER DISTRICTS FOR SPECIFIC SERVICES YET MAINTAINS ADVANTAGES OF SMALLER DISTRICTS FOR BASIC PROGRAMS.
6. ENCOURAGES COOPERATION BETWEEN URBAN, SUBURBAN AND RURAL INTERESTS IN SOLVING COMMON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES.
8. FACILITATES MEANINGFUL LOCAL INVOLVEMENT IN STATE AND REGIONAL PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING.

DISADVANTAGES THAT MIGHT APPEAR

1. EXPERIENCES HIGH START-UP AND OPERATIONAL COSTS
2. RECEIVES INADEQUATE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE STATE.
3. BE CONSIDERED BY THE PUBLIC AND THE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY AS PART OF A PLAN FOR "STATE TAKEOVER" OF LOCAL EDUCATION.
4. BE UNABLE TO RESPOND POSITIVELY TO MANY PROGRAM AND SERVICE NEEDS EXPECTED BY CONSTITUENT DISTRICTS.
5.. RESULT IN A LOSS OF LOCAL CONTROL AND DETERMINATION OF PROGRAM AND SERVICES.

6. CREATE SOME STAFF EMPLOYMENT AND SUPERVISION PROBLEMS RELATED TO SHARING OF PERSONNEL.
7. RESULT IN HIGHER LOCAL COSTS FOR INCREASED SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES UNDER CONTRACT.
8. REDUCE OR ELIMINATE COMMUNITY "INPUT" REGARDING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES PROVIDED.

THE INFORMAL ARRANGEMENT

THE COOPERATIVE OPERATING IN MY HOME DISTRICT IS MADE UP OF NINE PARTICIPATING SCHOOL DISTRICTS. THEY RANGE FROM DISTRICTS AS SMALL AS 197 STUDENTS TO, AS LARGE AS, 5550 AND REPRESENT A TOTAL SCHOOL POPULATION OF 17,260.

THIS ARRANGEMENT HAS BEEN IN OPERATION FOR SIXTEEN YEARS AND THOUGH IT OPERATES SMOOTHLY AND WITH A MINIMUM OF PROBLEMS THERE HAVE BEEN POINTS OF DIFFICULTY FROM TIME TO TIME.

THE COOPERATIVE IS MANAGED BY A CERTIFIED DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION WHO IS EMPLOYED BY A MAJORITY VOTE OF THE COUNCIL. THIS COUNCIL IS MADE UP OF THE NINE SUPERINTENDENTS FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

THE BUDGET FOR THE COOPERATIVE IS DEVELOPED WITHIN THE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE BUT IS APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL AND FINAL APPROVAL IS MADE BY EACH BOARD WITH AN ANNUAL RESOLUTION. THE COUNCIL SETS THE SALARY OF THE DIRECTOR AND HIS STAFF..

AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE IS MADE UP OF ONE REPRESENTATIVE BOARD MEMBER AND THE SUPERINTENDENT OF EACH MEMBER DISTRICT. THIS COMMITTEE OVERSEES THE FUNCIONING OF THE COOPERATIVE.

ALL PUPILS RESIDING WITHIN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT SERVED BY THE COOPERATIVE ARE ELIGIBLE FOR ADMISSION INTO THE CLASS

PROGRAM UNDER THE FRAMEWORK OF THE COOPERATIVE. PUPILS ENTERING THESE PROGRAMS MUST BE LEGALLY CLASSIFIED BY THEIR LOCAL CHILD STUDY TEAM AND HAVE A VALID INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM. THE DIRECTOR TOGETHER WITH THE TEAM OF THE LOCAL DISTRICT MEET WHENEVER NECESSARY TO DETERMINE APPROPRIATE PUPIL PLACEMENT.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAW, AN APPEAL PROCESS IS READILY AVAILABLE TO THE PARENT WHO QUESTIONS A PLACEMENT.

PRIORITY IS GIVEN AN APPROPRIATE PLACEMENT WITHIN THE PUPIL'S HOME DISTRICT. THE STUDENT WOULD THEN NOT BE CONSIDERED FOR ANY PLACEMENT WITHIN THE COOPERATIVE.

OPTION TWO IS AVAILABLE FOR PUPILS WHOSE NEEDS CANNOT BE SATISFIED WITHIN THE HOME DISTRICT CLASS PROGRAMS AND WHERE THE CHILD STUDY SEAM AND THE DIRECTOR MADE A PLACEMENT RECOMMENDATION. PARENTS ARE PROPERLY NOTIFIED AND ENCOURAGED TO VISIT IF THEY SO DESIRE. THE RECEIVING DISTRICT MUST AGREE TO THE PLACEMENT, AS WELL.

THE THIRD POSSIBLE OPTION IS FOR THE PUPIL WHOSE NEEDS CANNOT BE SATISFIED IN EITHER THE HOME DISTRICT CLASS PROGRAM OR COOPERATIVE CLASS PROGRAMS. THEY ARE THEN PLACE IN OTHER OUTSIDE PUBLIC OR PRIVATE SCHOOL PLACEMENTS.

THE SENDING (RESIDENT) DISTRICT IS EXPECTED TO MONITOR THEIR PUPILS, REGARDLESS OF THE PLACEMENT. THE STUDENT REMAINS THAT DISTRICT"S RESPONSIBLITY. GOOD COMMUNICATION MUST BE MAINTAINED BETWEEN THE CHILD STUDY TEAM, THE DIRECTORS OF SPECIAL SERVICES WITHIN THE DISTRICTS, THE ADMINISTRATORS AND THE DIRECTOR OF THE COOPERATIVE, SO THAT PARENTAL CONCERNS, PROBLEMS, AND EDUCATIONAL ITEMS CAN BE HANDLED TO THE BEST ADVANTAGE FOR ALL INVOLVED..

PUPILS PLACED OUTSIDE THEIR DISTRICT RECEIVE ALL THE REQUIRED CHILD STUDY TEAM SERVICES FROM THEIR HOME DISTRICT. THE RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE THE ANNUAL UPDATE OF THE IEP AND THE THREE YEAR RE-EVALUATION WHEN IT COMES DUE.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES REQUIRED FOR EVALUATION PURPOSES, SUCH AS NEUROLOGICAL, PSYCHIATRIC, ORTHOPEDIC, HEARING, CAN BE PURCHASED ONLY WITH THE EXPRESSED PERMISSION OF THE RESIDENT DISTRICT. NO DISTRICT IS ALLOWED TO FINANCIALLY OBILGATE ANOTHER FOR RELATED SERVICES WITHOUT PRIOR PERMISSION.

TRANSPORTATION IS PROVIDED TO AND FROM THE PLACEMENT. THIS IS PROVIDED BY THE LOCAL DISTRICT. TRANSPORTATION IS ANOTHER AREA THAT COOPERATIVE PLANNING AND EXECUTION WOULD BE BENEFICIAL..

FINALLY, TO KEEP PARENT INVOLVED AND CONCERNED, THE COOPERATIVE SPONSORS A PARENT GROUP WHICH OPERATES INTER DISTRICT. THIS GROUP PROVIDES INFORMATION TO PARENTS WHO DO NOT CARE TO BELONG AND PROVIDES A COMMUNICATION LINK BETWEEN COOPERATIVE, HOME, AND DISTRICT.

THE FORMAL ARRANGEMENT

THE COUNTY SPECIAL SERVICES CHOOL DISTRICT BECAME A REALITY AS A RESULT OF A NEW JERSEY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION RECOMMENDATION IN 1964. LEGISLATION ALLOWING SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT TO EDUCATE LOW-INCIDENCE HANDICAPPED WAS PASSED AND ALLOWED THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SCHOOL DISTRICT UNDER THE DIRECTION OF AN APPOINTED BOARD OF EDUCATION. LEGISLATION CALLED FOR APPOINTEES TO THIS BOARD TO HAVE DEMONSTRATED PREVIOUS INVOLVEMENT WITH THE HANDICAPPED, OR BY PARENTS OF THE HANDICAPPED. ADDITIONALLY, AN ADVISORY BOARD OF BOTH PARENTS AND PROFESSIONALS WERE REQUIRED TO MEET QUARTERLY WITH THE BOARD.

THIS DISTRICT PRESENTLY SERVES LOW-INCIDENCE HANDICAPPED CLASSIFIED AS: MULTIPLY HANDICAPPED, HEARING IMPAIRED, MENTALLY RETARDED, SOCIALLY HANDICAPPED, AUTISTIC, AND EMOTIONALLY HANDICAPPED.

THIS SPECIAL SERVICES DISTRICT BEGAN WITH A PROGRAM FOR SEVENTEEN STUDENTS CLASSIFIED AS MULTIPLY HANDICAPPED. MOST HAD NEVER BEEN IN SCHOOL. IN ADDITION TO THEIR LEARNING DISABILITIES, THEY WERE ALSO ORTHOPEDICALLY HANDICAPPED AND MANY WERE NON-AMBULATORY. BESIDES ACADEMICS, THEY RECEIVED PHYSICAL THERAPY, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY, AND SPEECH THERAPY. CONSULTATION WAS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM AN ORTHOPEDIC PHYSICIAN. IN ORDER TO MAKE THE LEARNING SITUATION AS VIABLE AS POSSIBLE, DEVICES WERE CREATED TO SUPPORT THESE YOUNG PEOPLE SO THAT THEY COULD BE IN A COMFORTABLE POSITION TO STUDY AND LEARN.

WITH THE SUCCESS OF THIS PROGRAM THEY EXPANDED SERVICES TO THE HEARING IMPAIRED. TO BEGIN THEY HAD AN ORAL PROGRAM, PROVIDING SERVICES TO CHILDREN FROM 5 TO 14 YEARS OF AGE. AS THE YEARS PROGRESSED, THEY FOUND IT NECESSARY TO PROVIDE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR THESE STUDENTS. TODAY THEY EDUCATE THE CHILD FROM ONE YEAR THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL. TOTAL COMMUNICATION IS OFFERED TO THOSE STUDENTS WHO CAN BEST BENEFIT FROM SUCH A PROGRAM.

WITH EACH SUCCESS THE PROGRAMS HAVE GROWN. THE COUNTY SPECIAL SERVICES SCHOOL DISTRICT IN ITS FORMAL SETTING HAS BEEN BETTER ABLE TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE VERY LOW INCIDENCE STUDENT. THE LESS FORMAL STRUCTURE OF THE COOPERATIVE HAS BEEN CAPABLE OF FULFILLING PROGRAM NEEDS FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT SO SEVERELY HANDICAPPED. THESE ARE PROGRAMS THAT WORK, TAILORED TO STUDENT POPULATIONS SUCH AS YOURS. MAYBE THEY CAN BE MODELS FOR YOU.